

**VILLAGE OF NORTHFIELD
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Minutes of February 12, 2013**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Chair Kevin T. Beal, Village Trustees Colin T. Bright, Dennis Donahue, Stephen Fitzhugh, and K. David Maxwell. Also present were Village Manager Jay Marcotte, Acting Clerk Ken McCann, and Karen Preis.

Chair Beal called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** The Board members and the public were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

- III. TOWN/VILLAGE MERGER DISCUSSION.** Trustee Fitzhugh stated that the Village has received an additional legal opinion on regarding the transfer of Village assets and liabilities to the new combined municipality should merger be approved by the voters. The legal opinion states that it would take a separate vote of Northfield Village residents to authorize this transfer. In addition, should the combined municipality default on utility bond payments and/or other debts, the ratepayers would be held responsible. Trustee Fitzhugh stated that he can see both sides of this issue as well as the level of autonomy that the new utility commissions would have. Chair Beal noted that the new legal opinion both confirmed and contradicted previous ones on the subject of the Village's assets and liabilities.

- IV. PUBLIC COMMENT (Scheduled and Unscheduled).** There was none.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. January 29, 2013 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Trustee Donahue, seconded by Trustee Maxwell, to approve the minutes. Trustee Fitzhugh stated that in the discussion of the Smart Grid Project, the phrase "fiber optic cable" is incorrect and should be replaced with "communications equipment." **Motion to approve revised minutes passed 5-0-0.**
- b. February 5, 2013 (Special Meeting).** Motion by Trustee Bright, seconded by Trustee Maxwell, to approve the minutes. Trustee Bright would like the minutes revised to show that he left the meeting early during the executive session. **Motion to approve revised minutes passed 5-0-0.**

VI. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. Warrant #16-13.** Motion by Trustee Bright, seconded by Trustee Fitzhugh, to approve Warrant #16-13 in the amount of \$361,002.57. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VII. OLD BUSINESS

- a. Village Common Rehabilitation Project.** Trustee Beal noted that there has been recent email conversation regarding the project's construction start date. Manager Marcotte confirmed that he has been in contact with Wendy Pelletier (Vermont Agency of Transportation) regarding the expiration date of the grant funding for this phase of the project. She stated that so long as "substantial work" is being done on the project, the grant will not "sunset." This work would include what is being done currently: paperwork being completed, meetings held, etc. Manager Marcotte confirmed that we now are looking at a construction start date following Labor Day this year (rather than in early summer as previously indicated). Since the State did not expect construction to begin on this project until 2014, it considers Northfield to be ahead of schedule. Trustees Maxwell and Fitzhugh would like confirmation in writing that the project start delay will not threaten grant money eligibility.

Trustee Fitzhugh then asked if there will be any need to coordinate this project with the State's plan to pave Vermont Route 12 this coming spring. Manager Marcotte stated that this would no longer be necessary.

- b. Taxation of Municipal Utilities.** Chair Beal would like to discuss this matter later in executive session (see below). Trustee Maxwell felt that the public should be informed that there was a recent court ruling in this matter in which the Village largely prevailed in its dispute with the Town over whether certain utility properties were subject to taxation.
- c. Smart Grid Project.** Trustee Fitzhugh stated that because recent snowstorms have delayed work in this project, he has nothing new to report.
- d. Streetlight Replacement Project.** Manager Marcotte reported that he will be speaking tomorrow on this matter with Josh Kelman, who is an Energy Consultant for Vermont Energy Investment Corporation (VEIC).

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Green Mountain Power (GMP) Contract for Outside Plant Services.** Manager Marcotte stated that this is the annual contract with GMP to perform line work and other outside services for the Northfield Electric Department (NED). There is a one percent (1%) cost increase from last year. He added that NED will be investigating other options this summer for outside services. Motion by Trustee Bright, seconded by Trustee Donahue, to approve and authorize Manager Marcotte to sign the GMP Contract for Outside Plant Services. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

Trustee Fitzhugh would like the Village to look into broad basing the cost when GMP makes a trip to Northfield to connect/disconnect a service. Currently the customer is billed for the full amount, which could be several hundred dollars. Trustee Fitzhugh would like to explore the possibility of capping the amount charged to the customer and having the remainder spread among other ratepayers. Trustee Maxwell noted that NED customers generally pay about twenty percent (20%) less on their electric bills than GMP customers. Trustee Fitzhugh felt that some of these savings could be used to lessen the "hit" on individual customers for GMP service calls. He and Manager Marcotte will be attending a Vermont Public Power Supply Authority (VPPSA) meeting this Thursday (02/14/13) and will inquire then about this possibility. Trustee Maxwell believes that it would be good to be pro-active on this matter. Chair Beal feels that any new policy that includes broad basing these expenses should differentiate between residential and commercial customers. Karen Preis asked if it were possible to allow NED customers to perform community service to pay for all or part of their electric bills. Trustee Maxwell stated that any such policy would have to be generated and authorized by Vermont's Public Service Board (PSB).

- b. MEAV, LLC Operating Agreement.** Chair Beal noted that Utility Office Manager Doug Reed had provided the Board members with a memorandum that explained why MEAV (Municipal Electric Association of Vermont) is seeking Limited Liability Company (LLC) status. Currently, the MEAV checking account is in its treasurer's name and uses his personal information, including social security number, for business purposes. With LLC status, MEAV will have its own federal identification number. Motion by Trustee Fitzhugh, seconded by Trustee Donahue, to approve and authorize Manager Marcotte to sign the MEAV, LLC Operating Agreement. Trustee Fitzhugh noted that MEAV represents all municipal electric companies in Vermont, including those who do not belong to VPPSA (such as Burlington Electric, etc.). **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- c. **Public Hearing (Town/Village Merger).** There will be a Public Hearing held on Tuesday, February 26, 2013, at 7:00 p.m. in the Community Room so Northfield Village residents can express their views on the Australian Ballot article (Town/Village Merger) that will be voted upon at the Special Village Meeting held on Town Meeting Day (03/05/13).

IX. MANAGER'S REPORT. Manager Marcotte had nothing to add.

X. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS.

- a. **Sidewalk Plowing.** Trustee Maxwell had been contacted by residents who complained that Village sidewalks were not being cleared in a timely manner during last Friday's snowstorm (02/08/13). Manager Marcotte stated that the harness on the trackless was damaged that day, which contributed to the delays. It was quickly repaired so that the sidewalks were plowed that weekend. He added that the Village is planning to replace this trackless with a Bobcat during the next fiscal year since that would be a more reliable and cost efficient piece of machinery. Ms. Preis noted that the residents of The Veterans Place are always willing to help with free snow shoveling when contacted. Chair Beal agreed that The Veterans Place has become a great resource for the Northfield community.

XI. PUBLIC COMMENT (Unscheduled)

- a. **Karen Preis: Tax Relief.** Ms. Preis is concerned that high property taxes are hurting the elderly in Vermont and would like something done on their behalf. Chair Beal noted that the Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL) and similar non-profits groups provide very useful services to those who are having problems in this difficult economy.

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION. Motion by Trustee Donahue, seconded by Trustee Maxwell, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1), in order to discuss a legal matter with Manager Marcotte present. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 8:21 p.m.

Motion by Trustee Bright, seconded by Trustee Maxwell, to come out of executive session. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board came out of executive session at 8:54 p.m. No action was taken.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Trustee Maxwell, seconded by Trustee Donahue, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

These minutes are subject to approval at the next regular meeting.